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INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 8536
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1375
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ DEC 9800
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 6789
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY 2736
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 004304

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [SOCI](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: INDIGENOUS MARCH TO BOGOTA

REF: BOGOTA 3829

Classified By: Classified By: Political Counselor John S. Creamer
For Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (U) After a 16-day trip from Cauca department, the indigenous protest reached Bogota on November 20. They demanded the GOC comply with prior commitments on land, apologize for making public statements linking the indigenous to the FARC, and make concessions on a range of issues including the Colombia-U.S. Trade Promotion Agreement (CTPA). The protest was hailed for its organization and lack of violence. The indigenous met with nine GOC Ministers, and agreed to set up a new forum to review previous GOC-indigenous agreements and to devise road maps for their implementation. GOC officials voiced concern that elements of the indigenous movement are being politicized by the far-left. End Summary.

PEACEFUL, ORGANIZED, AND POLITICIZED?

¶2. (U) Bogota City officials claim around 15,000 indigenous entered Bogota on November 20 after a 16-day trip from Cauca department. The march began after a five-hour meeting with President Uribe failed to produce an agreement on November 2 in Cauca. Cauca Association of Indigenous Councils (ACIN) Head Feliciano Valencia estimated 22,000 indigenous participated, noting the indigenous guard--the indigenous security forces armed with walking sticks--maintained discipline throughout the march. He regretted that Uribe did not meet with them in Bogota, but noted the march received support from other civic groups, including labor unions, students, and human rights groups. CRIC officials told us the march--and the earlier road blocks in Cauca--were necessary to, "get the GOC's attention."

¶3. (C) Ministry of Interior and Justice (MOIJ) Indigenous Affairs Director Pedro Posada told us the march was peaceful due to strong local and national logistical support. Still, he claimed the far-left is politicizing the indigenous' agenda, noting that 800 indigenous leaders met with opposition Polo Senator Alexander Lopez on November 21. He said Lopez--who supported the recent sugar cane workers strike in Valle de Cauca and is a vociferous Uribe critic--advocated for the symbolic indigenous overnight stay in Soacha, the Bogota suburb affected by recent extra-judicial killings. Vice Defense Minister Juan Carlos Pinzon praised the protest for its organization and peaceful nature.

14. (C) Cauca Governor Guillermo Gonzalez told us Cauca's indigenous leaders are trying to nationalize their agenda to become the representatives of all of Colombia's indigenous. He claimed the leaders are "insincere," and do not want to address real issues. Anthropologist Maria Gonzalez said some Cauca indigenous leaders have adopted an anti-globalization stance to garner support from other social movements. Still, she is skeptical that this will work, noting that many indigenous advocate an ethnocentric agenda that supports the expansion of indigenous lands and rights at the expense of Afro-Colombian and peasant groups. ACIN's and CRIC's growing use of the exclusionary rhetoric employed by the indigenous in Bolivia and Peru further alienates potential allies. She said many Afro-Colombians and peasants in Cauca do not view the indigenous as "good neighbors."

15. (C) Father Dario Echeverri, who helped mediate between the indigenous and the GOC in the recent protests, told us Colombia's national indigenous group--ONIC--pressed the Cauca groups to adopt a national agenda in an attempt to rebuild its influence. He said an unintended outcome of the 1991 Constitution was to strengthen elected indigenous officials at the expense of popular movements. Hence, the GOC prefers to negotiate with elected indigenous officials rather than the indigenous popular groups. Echeverri said ONIC sees the Cauca protests as an opportunity to regain national influence.

INTERNAL DIVISIONS

16. (C) Maria Gonzalez said the Cauca indigenous--who are centered on the Paez or Nasa ethnic group--are divided into three factions, which compete for political power. The first group consists of the more radical confrontationalists led by ACIN's Valencia. A second, more moderate group includes traditional CRIC leaders led by Ayda Quilce. The third, more conservative faction represents Paez who have held official government positions, such as Senator Jesus Pinacue and his brother Daniel. She noted that the radicals have the upper hand at the moment.

17. (C) 29th Brigade Commander General Barrera, who is based in Popayan and has responsibility for most of Cauca, claims a fourth group also exists. He told us the western Paez, who were converted by U.S. evangelical missionaries, do not share the "radical" agenda of the CRIC and ACIN which are based in northeastern Cauca. Barrero said the Army hopes to organize the western Paez through the evangelical-indigenous group Asonasa to counter CRIC and ACIN.

CTPA AND PLAN COLOMBIA REMAIN ISSUES

18. (C) Valencia said the indigenous met with nine GOC Ministers to discuss their five-point agenda on November 21. They publicly called for the GOC to comply with previous agreements, reject the CTPA, repeal mining and water laws, sign the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous, and end Plan Colombia and the GOC's democratic security policy. Valencia told us privately that the indigenous do not completely oppose the CTPA and Plan Colombia, but want to have a voice in renegotiating these programs. He predicted that there will be positive changes in USG policy due to, "changing political winds," and said the current CTPA would allow multinationals to swindle the indigenous through intellectual property claims. CRIC Chairperson Ayda Quilcue opposes aerial eradication, claiming the chemicals are, "poisoning her people."

DIALOGUE TO CONTINUE

19. (C) Valencia said the indigenous obtained two important GOC concessions in Bogota. The GOC agreed to review previous GOC-indigenous agreements in a broader council--which would include other social movements--rather than through the current Permanent Settlement Forum on Indigenous Issues (Mesa

de Concertacion Permanente). The council will try to devise road maps to ensure implementation of the different accords. He also said the GOC agreed to make reparations if the security forces are found responsible for indigenous deaths in the recent Cauca protests. CNP Commander General Naranjo told us the medical examiners report shows that three indigenous killed in the Cauca protests were victims of their own homemade bombs. Posada acknowledged the GOC concessions, but told us they do not represent major policy changes. Echeverri said the new council will need time to produce results, but said dialogue is better than street protests.

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